

# The 2<sup>ND</sup> Time Around

City of Alexandria Department of Transportation and Environmental Services

Fall/Winter 2003

Visit our Web site at [www.alexrecycles.org](http://www.alexrecycles.org)!

## GRASSCYCLING OFFERS SIMPLE ALTERNATIVE

One of summer's great traditions is dragging out the old lawnmower, cutting the grass, and trashing those mounds and mounds of clippings. But did you ever stop to think what happens to all those bags of clippings generated from your weekly mowing ritual?

Grass clippings make up a surprisingly large portion of the waste stream. Approximately 15 percent of all garbage consists of yard waste, and during the growing season half of that is grass clippings. A simple alternative to bagging clippings and throwing them away is to practice the art of "grasscycling."

Unlike many other forms of waste reduction, grasscycling sometimes requires you to do less, rather than more, work. Instead of raking up all those clippings and putting them in a bag or at the curb for pick-up, grasscycling is the natural recycling of grass.

Won't that cause thatch, which leads to decay and a bad looking lawn? Think again. Grass clippings decompose quickly and release valuable nutrients back into the soil. University studies have shown that grasscycling is not harmful to lawns when they are cared for properly. In fact, grasscycling has long been a common practice on large grass areas such as parks, golf courses, and sport fields – locations where clippings collection is not feasible.

The basics of grasscycling are nearly identical to conventional lawn care: Water and fertilize in moderation, keep mower blades sharp, cut when the grass is dry, and never remove more than one third the length of the grass height at once. Because bagging is eliminated and nutrients are returned to the soil, both time and money can be saved. Additionally, you can use up to one-third less fertilizer if you practice grasscycling, which saves money and helps the Chesapeake Bay by reducing fertilizer runoff from your home. So the next time you're mowing your lawn, save yourself time and money by "recycling" your grass clippings rather than throwing them away.

## CATCH THE COMPOSTING CRAZE

The City of Alexandria encourages residents to compost their yard debris, leaves, and brush wherever possible to prevent waste. What exactly is composting, some of you may ask? Composting is the natural process of decomposing organic material, like leaves or grass clippings. Bacteria and insects consume this material leaving nutrient rich soil. Composting has been going on in forests since the beginning of time and can easily be done in your backyard. A major advantage of composting for any gardener is that the home-grown compost can be used instead of commercial fertilizers and mulches.

Home composting is an easy, responsible way to keep millions of tons of organic materials each year from becoming a waste disposal burden. The City of Alexandria has just released a brochure that provides information on how to initiate backyard composting at your home. You can request it by contacting the Office of Recycling at (703) 751-5872, or by downloading it from the web site at [www.alexrecycles.org](http://www.alexrecycles.org).

**Additionally, the City will be partnering with Arlington County on October 11 to sell backyard composting bins to residents.** The bins will be sold for \$35 each, a real steal compared to the cost of most commercially-available composting bins sold today. The location and time of the sale will be determined soon; please check our website, [www.alexrecycles.org](http://www.alexrecycles.org), for further information. **We hope to see you out there, and look forward to helping you begin your composting adventure!**

## DON'T MAKE THE HOLIDAYS "THE HAULIDAYS"

The days after major holidays are often major hauling days for the City's refuse collection crews. Just picture that monstrous pile of wadded wrapping paper under the tree after Christmas – not to mention the tree itself – and you'll know what we're talking about.



Paper already makes up over 30 percent of the solid waste stream. During the Christmas season alone, the average

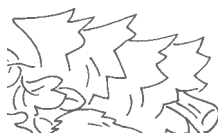
household will generate between 3 and 10 bags of beyond-the-ordinary trash, averaging approximately 35 pounds per person. In fact, from Thanksgiving to the influx of Christmas cards, 25 percent more trash is thrown away during the holiday season than at any other time of year!

It's easy to go overboard with gift wrapping. We all want the gifts we give to look special and exciting – to give those gifts with that personal touch. So we run out and sometimes spend even more on expensive wrapping paper, ribbons and cards than we do on the gift itself. There is a better way.

Try putting more "gift" in your gift wrap. Instead of disposable paper, make the wrapping part of the gift. For example, wrap Mom's blouse in a matching scarf and tie it with a hair ribbon. Or "reverse" wrap by putting the best thing on the outside. Wrap a good paperback book in a nice bathrobe, using the belt as a ribbon, then pop a packet of cocoa or a candy cane in the pocket. The book inside gives support to the robe so it feels like a sturdy package.

No-waste gift wrapping can actually enhance the quality of your gift, showing that you have done something extra special for that special someone. It also shows that you've done something extra for the environment – and it's a lot of fun in the bargain.

P.S. Don't forget to recycle your Christmas tree! The City of Alexandria offers Christmas tree pickup and recycling service after the holiday season has concluded. The City chips all the trees into a mulch product, which is then available to all citizens free of charge at the City's mulch site. **The site is located at 4215 Eisenhower Avenue and opens every year on March 1.** For information on collection dates, please check the website, [www.alexrecycles.org](http://www.alexrecycles.org).



## REDUCE THAT BULGE OF PACKAGING WASTE!

Packaging is one of the chief contributors to the nation's waste management dilemma. It accounts for at least a third of the volume of America's trash. Much packaging has valid uses, but much of it also is completely frivolous with no real functional value.

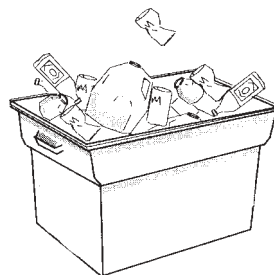
Excessive packaging practices are not only wasteful and environmentally unsound, but also costly, to you, the typical consumer. The Environmental Defense Fund notes that \$1 of every \$10 we spend on food, for example, pays for packaging. When evaluating which of several products to

buy, a cost-conscious and environmentally careful shopper should consider the product's packaging characteristics before buying. Shoppers should think about avoiding overpackaged, disposable, and nonreusable or nonrecyclable products.

When packaging cannot be avoided, its recyclability should be considered. To recycle corrugated boxes remove all packing materials and flatten them before bringing them to a recycling drop-off center for collection (check out our web site or call us for more information about a location near you).

### FAST FACTS ABOUT RECYCLING:

Did you know that for every ton of paper recycled, we save three yards of landfill space?



### TIPS TO KEEPING YOUR BIN IN RECYCLING "SHAPE"

Robbie the Recycling Squirrel regularly roves around the City, not only to educate citizens on the recycling program, but also to make sure they are putting the right materials into the bin after they choose to recycle. Here are some tips to keep your bin full of material we can take, and keep the rest of it out:

- Remember to remove your lids on bottles! We love the glass and plastic, but those pesky lids make the material more difficult to recycle.
- Recycle all your aluminum. We take lots of beverage containers, but we also love to have the steel cans, empty aerosols, and food cans as well. Please clean them out prior to putting them in the bin. Robbie is the only critter we want to have near the recycling bins.
- Rid the bin of any plastics except your plastic bottles. Most people are eager to recycle all their plastics, such as yogurt cups, margarine tubs, and deli trays. But our program and most others in the region have no recycling market for these plastics. Remember to check the neck, if it's wider than the base of your container, keep the plastic out of the bin.
- Revise the set-out of newspaper and magazines. We want them next to your bin in a paper bag, not inside the bin. The mixing of paper with other containers in your bin makes it more inefficient to collect. And if you set out your paper in a plastic bag, it will contaminate our material at the processing plant.

By following these tips, you can help us make our recycling

program even better. Robbie the Recycling Squirrel sees lots of great recyclers in our community every day, and thanks you for your efforts! Without your outstanding participation in our program, we would not be able to achieve our 28 percent recycling rate and recycle more than 5,000 tons of material through our curbside program each year.

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Would you like Robbie the Recycling Squirrel to conduct a recycling program for your group? Please contact Jennifer Harris, Recycling Specialist, for more information at (703) 751-5872.

### ELECTRONICS GET NEW LIFE WITH RECYCLING

Is your basement filling up with old televisions, computers, and cell phones as you try to keep pace with new technology? Don't forget that Alexandria offers a safe and easy alternative to throwing those electronics away. Our electronics recycling drop-off center operates in conjunction with our household hazardous waste collection center, open every Monday (except holidays) at 3600 Wheeler Avenue, from 10 am to 6 pm. For more information, check out our web site at [www.alexrecycles.org](http://www.alexrecycles.org).



**RECYCLING NEWS FLASH:** A new recycling drop-off center awaits your recycled materials! We opened the center at 4251 Eisenhower Avenue last November, and we can take your paper, cardboard, cans and bottles. See you there soon!

**RECYCLING WORKS!** Did you know that recycling is not only good for the environment, but also good for the economy? According to the recently-published *Recycling Economic Information Study*, recycling and reuse businesses encompass more than 56,000 establishments that generate over \$236 billion in annual revenue and employ more than 1.1 million people nationwide. That's yet another great reason to keep investing in your recycling program!

### REMEMBER THE "HOLIDAY SLIDE" WITH YOUR COLLECTION DAY...

Unsure of your next recycling collection day when Christmas falls in the middle of the week? Just remember the holiday slide: your collection is one day late after the City observes a

holiday. The only two exceptions are in November – **we DO collect on Veterans' Day and Thanksgiving Day**, so keep it out on those collection days. If you have questions, please call us at (703) 751-5130 or check the web site for the latest calendar.

### AMERICA RECYCLES DAY JUST AROUND THE CORNER!

Saturday, November 15, the City of Alexandria will, once again, celebrate America Recycles Day. The theme of this year's celebration is "Make Every Day America Recycles Day." This year, the City is teaming up with its local libraries to host a recycled art contest, called "Rethink Recycling." Students will be challenged to design art sculptures from recycled materials, and display their artwork for judging at Burke Library on November 15. Breakfast and prizes are available for all participants. For more information, contact the Office of Recycling at 703-751-5872.



The City will also once again hold a "Recycle Right" contest. Each day during the week of November 10-13, City crews will choose a daily winner based upon their curbside recycling bin, which must demonstrate correct separation of all recyclables from refuse at the curb. Residents are encouraged to be creative and "dress up" their recycling bin so crews will take notice of their recycling efforts. Residents will be notified by mail if they have been chosen as the winners of the "Recycle Right" contest. The winners will receive recycled-content prize packages awarded by the Office of Recycling.

Nationally, America Recycles Day will be awarding great prizes for those submitting recycling pledge cards. These prizes include a Ford Focus partial zero emissions vehicle, spa getaways, mountain bikes, and other recycled-content prizes. Additionally, the state of Virginia will choose 5 winners to receive recycled-content prize packages valued at \$150 each. The drawing will be held in late November.

You may demonstrate your commitment to recycling, by completing the "America Recycles Day" pledge card on the back of this newsletter. Please mail it to the address listed on the card. In December 2003, a random drawing will be held nationally and statewide, with winners eligible to receive great prizes described above.

For more information on America Recycles Day, visit the Web site at [www.americarecyclesday.org](http://www.americarecyclesday.org).



Department of Transportation and  
Environmental Services  
Solid Waste Division, Office of Recycling  
133 S. Quaker Lane  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

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*If you'd like to receive this newsletter electronically,  
send an e-mail to:*

**jennifer.harris@ci.alexandria.va.us**



## America Recycles Day Contest Entry Form

*Washington Metropolitan Area*

### National and Regional Prizes

**National:** Win a Ford Focus PZEV, spa getaways, bicycles,  
and other great prizes!

**Regional:** Recycled Product Prize Packages valued at \$150,  
\$500 grant to local school, youth bicycles

Mail completed form to:

America Recycles Day Contest  
c/o Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments  
Department of Environmental Programs  
777 North Capitol Street, N. E., Suite 300  
Washington, D. C. 20002-4239

Please enter me in the drawing to be held in December 2003 for national prizes  
and in late November for regional prizes.

For America Recycles Day, I will: *(check one or more)*

- ☐ buy more recycled-content products
- ☐ increase recycling efforts
- ☐ make other recycling-related efforts

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime phone \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Check here if you are a student (K - 12th grade).

One entry per person. No purchase necessary. Entrant of any age may win. **Entries must be postmarked by November 1, 2003.** For a complete set of rules, or to  
enter via the Internet, visit [www.americarecyclesday.org](http://www.americarecyclesday.org). **Your name and address will be kept confidential and will NOT be placed on any mailing lists.**